1; Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
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a mat or a cloth, supported in a reclining position with pillows and cloths, or on a covered box standing about a foot from the ground, with her legs drawn up. No fire is built in the house, all doors and windows are tightly shut, and covers are provided against a chill. A candle stands lighted at the threshold, and holy water is poured beside it; a candle is also often lighted in the church before the statue of the saint who corresponds to the *vodun* deity under whose protection the woman in labor is thought to be. In the room with her is the midwife and as many as six, seven, eight, or nine older women belonging to the families of the woman and her husband. The hands of the woman are made to rest on her knees, but where labor is prolonged, her arms are supported above her head to afford relief. She is three times given very hot tea or a drink made of the stewed leaves of the mango tree and of the *bois lait*. The midwife, with palm oil on her hands, watches the rhythm of labor and presses on the abdomen to facilitate delivery.

If it becomes evident that this will be difficult, a *vodun* priest is at once called to determine by divination whether or not the deities who have been propitiated are satisfied. If the answer is a negative one, he promises future sacrifices or gives minor offerings immediately. Care is also taken to ascertain whether the trouble is due to the discontent of the family dead who may have been angered by neglect to wear mourning for them, or because sacrifices or a *service* due them have been delayed too long. Inquiries are similarly made to determine whether the spirits of twins might not be displeased, while the possibility that evil magic may have been invoked is not overlooked, especially if the husband has several wives. If the inquiry shows that the magic of a co-wife was responsible, a strong counter-charm is made at once. Should the woman in labor eventually die, however, her death is not considered to be the result of any act of infidelity on her part, and does not, as in other Negro cultures, prevent the usual burial and mourning customs being carried out.

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carried during the night, they wait for daylight. Salt is added to the hole, "so that the evil eye cannot take it (for magic purposes), for with salt it spoils very quickly." Neither the hole nor its contents are held to be of future importance, and though the child may be shown where the cord and placenta were buried, by that time nothing will remain of it which might be of use to a maker of charms. After three or four days the cord falls off and muscat powder is applied to heal the wound cleanly. The bit of cord is saved, and if the child becomes ill, this is boiled and the water given as a drink. Occasionally an entire umbilical cord is dried and retained; and one woman spoke of the cord of her mother as still being in existence.

The mother is also bathed in water in which calabash leaves and other ingredients have been steeped, and after being carefully dried, a band is tightly tied about her abdomen to give her support. A cloth is placed to cover the vagina, which is not cleansed until the following day, though after that the vaginal region is washed twice daily for some forty days. Red wine is given to women immediately after delivery to sustain them until food can be prepared. Bananas, salt fish, milk, chocolate, and a dish of stew made of chicken and rice are offered, and in most instances the women eat heartily.

The cloths used during childbirth are carefully guarded, the woman herself or a trusted member of her family seeing to the task of washing them, so as to prevent their being used for evil magic. If a miscarriage occurs, the fetus is buried in a hole dug in the floor of the woman's house while the woman herself is bathed and otherwise cared for as in the case of a normal delivery.

A woman is usually up and about three or four days after the birth of her child, or sooner if there is no one to help her with her household duties, in which case she may even be obliged to perform the heavy work of going to the river for water within the week, though she is careful not to bend down

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1968) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3



days, according to the bocor's prescription. It is also employed to protect an individual against various forms of the ouanga.

Against poisons, the usual protection is the *drogue*, prepared by a bocor or a leaf doctor who specializes in such things. After having drunk a drogue, a man is regarded as immune to poison. Should a man be a "horse" of the loa Ogoun Balindjo, however, no drogue is necessary, for Balindjo's people are regarded as immune even without such precautions.

Foretelling the future and divination take two general forms. In one variety, a bocor or *divineur*, using ritual paraphernalia such as cards, flour, or ashes, takes personal responsibility for the divination. In the other form, the divineur functions only when possessed by a loa, and it is the deity himself who foretells and foresees. An account of this kind of divination is given in chapter 6. "Horses" of the loa Mâit' David when possessed are given packs of cards, for they are reputed to be able to divine the future.

Certain houngans use the instrument known as the *gembo* as a divining device. This is a small shell about the size of a lemon, through which a long cord is passed. When there is no tension on the cord, the shell can easily be slid back and forth. When the cord is taut, the shell will not slide. The houngan holds one end of the cord under his foot, the other end with his hand above it. He starts his divination with the shell at the top and the cord taut. Shaking his asson with the other hand, he talks *langage* and asks questions. To indicate a "yes" answer he relaxes the tension on the cord and the shell slips downward an inch or so. The typical gembo is decorated with beads, old coins, religious medals, snake bones, and a fragment of mirror.

There are several ceremonies for locating a thief or other guilty person. One is called *passage d'alliance*. A ring suspended on a string is held over a person's head. If it moves in a regular pendulous way, the person is innocent; but if it swings in a circle, his guilt is established. Another method is the use of a long stick. The stick is pointed at one man, then another, and when the end vibrates in a circular manner the guilty party has been located. This technique is known as *jugement de baguette*. A third method is the one known as *passé balai*. A man sits in a low chair and small branches and leaves of the *balai* (broom) tree are placed under the chair and fastened to its uprights. A guilty person sitting in this chair will cause the *balai* branches to vibrate and close in on him.

The role of the *docteur fè*—the leaf doctor—straddles the field of magic and pharmacology. Many of his potions are of a mystical and

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3



Many of his potions are of a mystical and semiritual nature; yet from roots and leaves he brews specific medicines for specific illnesses, such as rheumatism, fevers, malaria, worms, and yaws. Sometimes his cures are effective, sometimes they fail. The leaf doctor is consulted for poisons and their antidotes, though many poisons, such as that in the wari bean, may be gathered and dispensed by anyone.

One of the macabre figures in Haitian folk belief is the *zombie*. In the most general sense, the name designates the bland soul of a person who died without the distinction of having a loa in his head. The soul or spirit has no special will. It cannot affect the living in any way, unlike the lutin, the djablesse, and those who were buried possessed of mystéres. It does not harass enemies or importune its descendants. It is an undynamic, simple, otherworldly spirit, a sort of negative afterimage. It does not need to be placated or feared.

But the word *zombie* has another, more popular meaning, signifying a human being who has "died" and been resurrected from the graveyard by members of the Zeaubeaup Society, by a wicked sorcerer, or by some other person who has realized the "power" to perform this act.

The Haitian countryside is full of tales about fresh graves that have been robbed of their bodies by practitioners of this special form of black magic. By a secret formula these soulless "dead" are revived and given a semblance of life. They lack only the power of will. Without that, they are at the complete command of the sorcerer who has disinterred them. They are presumed to be spirited away and put to work at drudgery in some remote place. Stories are told of plantations in the mountains whose entire labor force is made up of zombies, the animated dead. You can tell a zombie when you see him. His eyes are dull and glazed, he gives no sign of recognition to people he once knew, he moves slowly and ploddingly at his tasks, and he takes orders only from his master. He neither sings nor dances, and he eats and drinks without interest. His facial expression never changes. He is emotionally and mentally dead. Neither the rites of the Church nor those of Vodoun can help him. There is only one formula for breaking the spell. If he eats salt he will either regain full life or die a merciful death. The master therefore takes great care that his zombies never have salt.

Haitians have many explanations of this mystical phenomenon. Some hold that the sorcerer has the unique power to revive the dead. Others believe that the victim is not really dead but has succumbed to a virulent poison which numbs all the senses and stops bodily functions but does not truly kill. Upon disinterment, the victim is given an antidote which restores most physical processes but leaves the mind in an inert state, without will or the power to resist.